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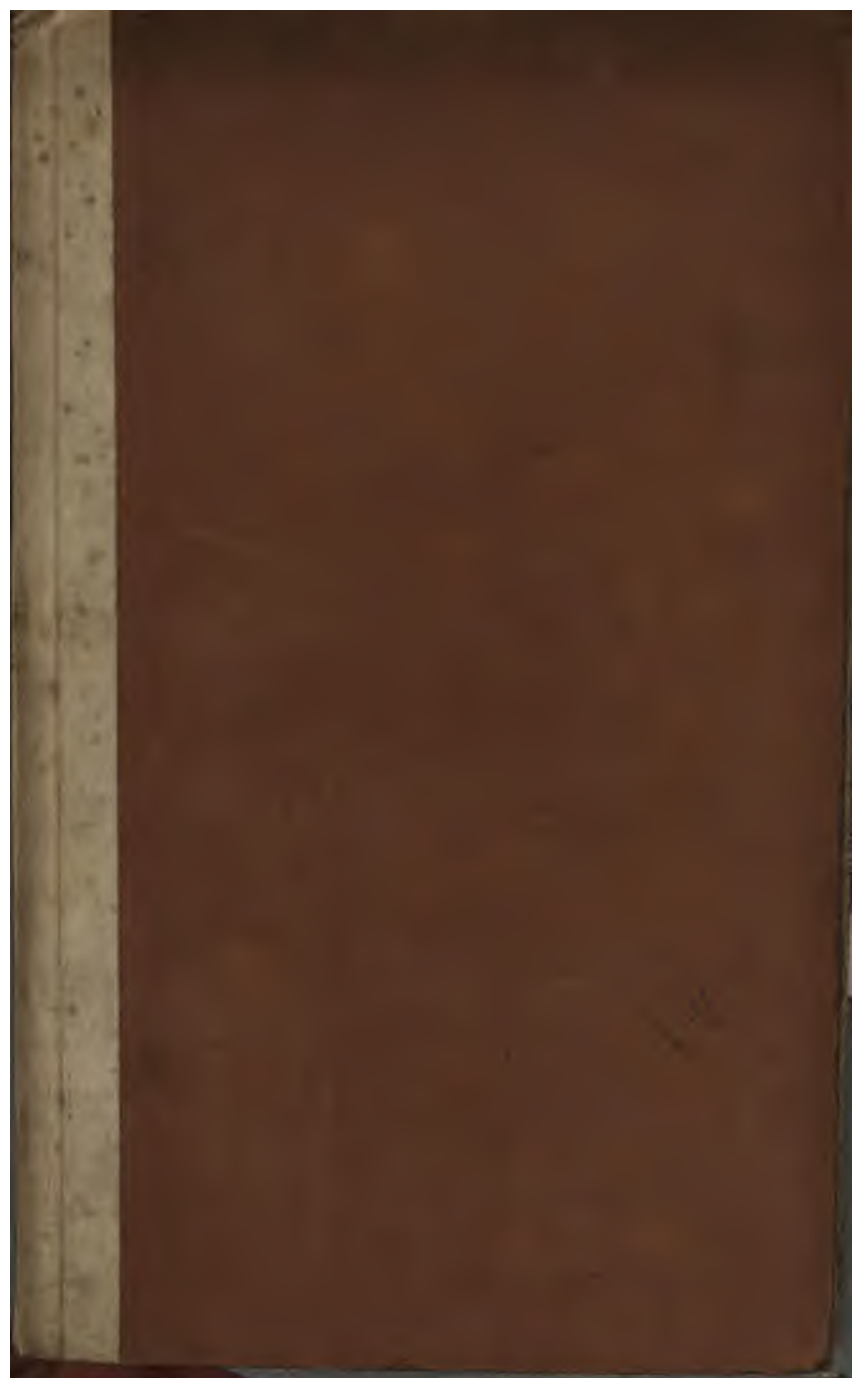
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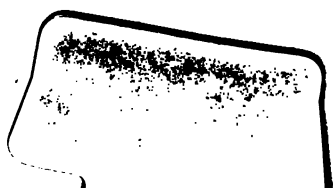
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A Prefatory  
**EPISTLE**

Concerning some  
**REMARKS**  
To be published on  
*Homer's I L I A D:*

Occasioned by  
The PROPOSALS of Mr. Pope  
towards a new *English* Version  
of that Poem.

---

*To the Reverend Dr. SWIFT,*  
*Dean of St. Patrick's.*

---

By *RICHARD FIDDES*, B. D.  
Chaplain to the Right Honourable  
the Earl of Oxford.

---

—'Αμάρτη' οὐ γινέσ. Long.

---

L O N D O N :

Printed for *John Wyat*, at the *Rose*, and  
*Henry Clements*, at the *Half-Moon* in  
*St. Paul's Church-yard.* 1714.

2931



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A Prefatory  
EPISTLE, &c.

*Reverend Sir,*

**Y**OUR acquainting me with Mr. *Pope's* Design of publishing a new *English* Version of the *Iliad*, has occasioned a Review of some Cursory Observations I had formerly made on that Poem, which I am now putting into a Method somewhat more regular, and intend myself the Honour, at proper *Intervals*, of communicating to You: In the mean time, if this *Prefatory Address* may be of any use, which *you* are the best able

A 2

to



### ◆ *A Prefatory Epistle.*

to determine, I shall be glad to see it made publick; tho' from no other Motive of Vanity, except that of being thought to have a share in your Friendship, and to have received the most ingenuous, the most sensible and seasonable Proofs of it. In *particular*, from your recommending me to that noble *Mecenas* of the Age, who dispenses his Favours with a Magnificence, worthy of the greatest Mind, in the highest Station: And *who*, notwithstanding he is so thoroughly vers'd in all the Arts of Government, and so continually taken up with them, yet being a consummate Master in all the Parts of *polite* Literature himself, is pleas'd to treat those, who may be thought to have any distant Views towards *it*, with all the Freedom of an easy, general and improving Conversation.

Pardon

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Pardon me, Sir, for laying hold on so fair an Opportunity of gratifying a reasonable *Ambition*; and of acknowledging myself, in a most Signal manner, obliged to so Illustrious a *Minister*, so necessary to Her *Majesty*, to our *Common* Happiness, and, in the present Conjunction, to that of all *Europe*.

Yet there is one Objection, Mr. *Dean*, which I am sensible, were I otherways equal to my Subject, will lye against me, for taking this Occasion of shewing myself *grateful*; 'Tis thought incumbent on Divines, rather to pursue such a Method of Study, as may have a more immediate Relation to the Nature or Duties of their Office, than to amuse themselves with foreign and poetical Disquisitions. So, that instead of employing our Time or Speculations on the *Father* of the Poets, we should rather be turning over the

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Fathers of the Church, the Counsels, the Schoolmen, and Commentators.

This kind of Study has not only its use, but is the most proper, or rather indeed necessary to those of our Order. But may we not too sometimes divert our Thoughts to less grave and serious, provided they be innocent Subjects? For what Reason?

'Tis strange then, that an Objection, so *weak*, should yet on some Occasions, have had so great Weight, that I could name you those, who have done themselves no great Service, by making Court to the *Muses*, tho' in a chaste and honourable manner. The excellent Mr. *Norris*, had probably made the same Observation; and therefore tho' he wanted not a Genius for *Poetry*, yet he soon, and perhaps very prudently, laid aside the Thoughts of Cultivating it.  
But

## *A Prefatory Epistle.* 7

But whether it were on the Account of his poetical Taste; or for some private, and possibly *Party-Regards*, that a Person of his Merit was not rais'd to a higher Station in the Church, which he so well, and faithfully served, is rather to be considered by those, who think they have nothing less to account for, than the disposal of *Ecclesiastical* Preferments.

We cannot however blame Persons of a *flagrant* Piety, for taking Umbrage, in so licentious an Age, at every thing that may lead us too far beside the Design, or sink us below the Dignity of our *Function*; we should rather be inclined to pardon the Effects of such a *Zeal*, tho' it should possibly happen not to be according to Knowledge; especially in *great Men*, who have many times no other way of judging concerning Merit, but by hearing with other Peoples

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ples Ears, and are *sometimes* for that Reason, in a manner obliged to make wrong Judgments.

This lessens our surprize at the very different Qualities we now and then find good Men entitled to in their private Conversation, and in their more publick Character. And I shall ever account him in the Number of good Men, who, though of a more open and *ingenuous*, is yet of a regular inoffensive Behaviour, and so far from being guilty of any Indecency himself, that he will not tolerate, what has the least Tendency that way, in others. But I shall still have the greater Idea of his *Goodness*, when 'tis observable he embraces all proper Occasions of doing *Good*, and that upon no other Motive, but the bare and genuine Satisfaction of *doing* it.

Certainly it can be no diminution to the Character of *such* a Person,

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Person, that he has *Wit*, that he has entertained or *served* the Publick with it.

But after all, *good Sir*, I am not so much concern'd at the Impropriety, as the Difficulty of this Undertaking; and a Sense of my being so very inferior to it. The Author of the *Essay* on Criticism, who has a Wit capable of every thing, but what relates to the Controversy betwixt us and the Church of *Rome*, will, it is hop'd, with a fine Version of the *Iliad*, oblige the World with just Remarks upon it. As he has confessedly the most sprightly and easy *Muse*, except perhaps one Person you will not give me leave to Name, he will now have a noble Occasion of trying her *Strength*. And there will be a great Disappointment of the general Expectation, if he do not at once enrich the Language wherein he writes, and reduce it,

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which seems very much wanting, still nearer to a *Standard*.

This, Sir, as to the *Occasion* of my present Address to you, which, whatever becomes of it, I am proud to embrace; for the farther I have gone out of the way to wait upon you with it, the more respectful, I hope, will the *Present* be thought.

Let us now, Sir, if you please, proceed to what it may be proper to premise, concerning the *Remarks* themselves. And what I propose, here by the way, in this Prefatory Letter to it; is in the *first* place to say something more particularly in Defence of so bold an Undertaking. Secondly, To give a general Idea of *Homer's* Character, from the greatest Authorities and best Criticks among the Ancients; thence I shall proceed to shew the Usefulness of my Design: And, lastly, The Method

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rhod wherein I thought proper to pursue it.

1. After so many of the best Pens, from the Days of *Aristotle*, have been, from time to time, employ'd in Commenting upon the Works of *Homer*; it may be thought, little new remains to any One, that follows, but the poor and *servile* Work of glean- ing after them; or at most, that *fraudulent* Work of putting his Sickle, with as artful and clean a Con- veyance, as he can, into their Harvest.

This would be a very discour- aging Reflection indeed, were it always to hold necessarily good: For an Author, who has any Spi- rit, would no more lie under the scandalous Imputation of *Theft*, than that of *Poverty*.

Yet this Consideration does not give me any great Pain. I am in hopes of saying at least something



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*new* upon my Subject, and am however assur'd of saying several things that are new to myself, which did not occur to me in reading, what others have written upon the Subject, but were the Result of my own Observations, and seem'd naturally, in my way of thinking, to arise out of the Passages, which occasioned them.

“ Every one that has read the  
 “ Criticks (*says an excellent Modern*  
 “ Critick) who have written upon  
 “ the *Odyssey*, the *Iliad* and the  
 “ *Æneid*, knows very well, that  
 “ though they agree in their Opinions  
 “ concerning the great Beauties  
 “ in those Poems, they have  
 “ nevertheless each of them discovered  
 “ several Master-Strokes,  
 “ which have escap'd the Observation  
 “ of the Rest. The ingenious  
 “ Author had a Right to apply  
 “ this Remark to himself : It is  
 “ acknowledged Mr. *A——n*, has discovered

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*peculiar* to every one of them, which distinguishes him, and sometimes renders even what is less regular and beautiful in the Composition, yet more agreeable to those who like his *way*, or are inclin'd to favour him.

I have said enough Sir, perhaps too much, to justify the Choice of my Subject; but before we proceed any farther, it is necessary I should first premise, and once for all acquaint you, That I do not here intend to confine my self strictly to the Scheme before laid down, or to pursue it in a *Method*, exactly regular; but shall claim a common Privilege in the Epistolary way of Writing, and occasionally make such Reflections, as most naturally occur from the Matter under Consideration; yet shall be careful, Sir, never to wander so far from the main Point, but I shall still keep it always in view.

*Horace,*

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*Horace*, whose Authority you will not dispute, has in his *Epistles* discover'd much of that Humour which he makes the Character of *Vulcius* in human Life:

*Et properare loco, & cessare, & quæ-  
rere, & uti gaudentem* —

Which I have somewhere seen very happily imitated in these words:

*Went where he pleas'd, said what he  
thought.*

All Persons have not Strength of Mind to undergo the Labour of Attention to a long Train of Proofs, or to keep a steady Eye on one continued Subject: A more free and unconfined way of Writing, wherein the Author now and then makes easy and diverting Excursions, provided he do not lose sight of his Subject, is what *ordinarily* pleases the Reader most; and especially in the *Epistolary* way, where  
such

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such Liberties seem as proper for entertaining a Friend, as *Episodes* in Heroick Poetry for relieving the Mind.

*Montaigne*, in his *Essays*, is famous for the Irregularity I am speaking of, but 'tis an Irregularity which strangely becomes him; and tho' the *Title* to any one of his *Essays* may almost indifferently serve for any other, and he is no sooner enter'd into his Subject (if *ever* he may be said to enter into it) but he runs off immediately from it again; yet his Rambles have something so sprightly and Gentleman-like in them, that he carries us insensibly along with him, and we are very much inclined to pardon him a Fault that pleases.

But not to abuse the Liberty here contended for too much, I return to give a general Idea of *Homer's* Character, from the greatest Authorities and best Criticks among the Ancients. The

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The universal Esteem this Poet has been possess'd of in all Age from his own, is indeed of it self sufficient to excite a Curiosity, and justify an Ambition of being acquainted with him. To attack to dispute the Reputation of *Homer* is, in effect, to question whether there has been any Person of Distinction in the learned World since his Time, capable of making a true Judgment. He who could accommodate what he wrote to the different Taste, Manners, and Inclinations of Men, and in different Ages, must have been a perfect Master in the Art of *Writing*, and the Knowledge of *Things*. None but a universal Genius, could have pleas'd all Men, at all Times.

We ought not to envy an Age wherein we live, the Reputation of producing a great many fine and curious Pieces in the several kind of Poetry, except that of the *Epo*  
*peia*

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*peia*; but the Misfortune is, they are commonly built on too slight a Foundation, or with too slender Materials to last long; nay, they sometimes come to Decay, in less time than was employ'd in *Compiling* them: Whether it be, that in these Days, wherein we must allow Men to have Wit, they more generally want Strength of Genius, or that they write chiefly with regard to the reigning Humour of the Time, or perhaps to the corrupt Taste which Party-Distinctions so frequently occasion: Whatever the Reason be, a great many of our modern *Compilers*, so they can but raise a Paper-work, which may make a little Crackling and a sudden transient Blaze, seem to have no farther Consequences.

*Rapin* gives us much the same Reason why the *French* do not excel in the nobler kinds of Poetry. *Great Poetry*, says he, *must be animated*

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*mated and sustain'd by great Sentiments: but these we ordinarily want, either because our Wit is too much limited, or because we take not care to exercise it on important matters.*

[*Rap. on Arist. P. §. 26.*] And very probably the Author of the Epistle before *Virgil's Æneis*, Translated by Mr. *Dryden*, refers to this Passage; where, he says, "The want of Genius, of which I have accus'd the *French*, is laid to their Charge by one of their own great Authors, tho' I have forgotten his Name, and where I read it.

But I can no more suppose Mr. *Dryden* to have been the Author of that *Epistle*, than I can believe he was a rigid *Republican*, and violent Opposer of *Hereditary Right*, as the Gentleman to whom we owe it, whoever he was, affects to discover himself. He particularly endeavours to prove from that one Line,

Se-

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*Secretisque piis his dantem jura  
Catonem.*

that *Virgil* was a good Commonwealth's Man in Heart. • But Mr. *Dryden*, Sir, in the Life of *Virgil*, observes, "That Poet would say  
" nothing of the younger *Cato*, be-  
" cause he was an implacable Ene-  
" my of *Julius Caesar*, nor could  
" the mention of him be pleasing  
" to *Augustus*: And that Passage,  
*continues he,*

— *His dantem jura Catonem,*  
may relate to his Office, as he was  
a very severe Censor.

Mr. *Dryden* might very well have excus'd a Friend from doing him the Kindness of writing a Critick for him; wherein he is not only represented as strangely forgetful of himself, but inconsistent with his known and avowed Principles.

But *Homer*, who had all the Force and Extent, as well as Vivacity



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vacuity of Thought, a Poet ought to have, did not confine his *Muse* to any such *narrow* or particular Views, but chose a Subject, and Manner of handling it, suitable to the Greatness of his Genius: A *Manner*, wherein he has universally accomplish'd the two great Ends of Poetry, and at once shew'd himself able to *delight* and *instruct* all his Readers.

It were endless to cite all the Elogiums which the great Men of Antiquity have left us upon this Poet: It may suffice in general to say, that he has been constantly applauded by those who have ever merited the greatest *Applause* themselves; that his Poems have been consulted as *Oracles*; his Sentences drawn into *proverbial* Sayings and standing Rules of Life: *Medals* have been struck in Honour to him; and there is scarce any Writer among the Ancients, in any Art or Science,

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Science, but has been a Debtor to him.

The Veneration paid to him was so great, that it sometimes degenerated into Superstition: If what *Ælian* reports be true, that he had a Temple with an Image erected to him. 'Tis the less to be admired, that they attributed to his Works a magical kind of Power for Curing Diseases, particularly that they suppos'd it an effectual Charm towards the removal of a *Quartan* Ague, to lay the fourth Book of the *Iliad* under the Patient's Head. The *Sortes Virgilianæ*, in all probability derived their Origin from a like Superstitious Regard to the Memory of *Virgil*; and without doubt were altogether as infallible in telling of Fortunes, as *Homer's Amulet* in restoring to Health.

But I shall descend to shew what Sentiments in particular some of the

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the most celebrated among the Ancients had of our Poet.

*Aristotle*, one of the first Names in the Republick of Letters, and a great Genius himself, says, That *Homer* not only excelled all other Poets both in *Diction* and *Thought*, but by way of Eminence, that he alone merited the Name of *Poet*. The Superiority he ascribes to him, is more than Human; 'tis spoken of after a manner, which imports, that *Homer's* Muse was really of Divine Original. This is *Aristotle's* general Character of him, but very large Quotations might be made out of this Philosopher, concerning his particular Excellencies. I shall but cite that one place, where *Homer* is said to have been the only Poet who knew what it was proper for a *Poet* to design, ὁ δὲ ποιεῖν. for so I render the Words, being supported by that Reference of *Ho-*

*race*

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race to them——*Qui nil molitur inepte.* Tho' they may and should perhaps be extended to signify, that *Homer* alone knew, what became a Poet with respect to all the Graces and Ornaments, as well as the Contrivance or Conduct of a Poem.

But what, Sir, I would farther observe from *Aristotle* is, That he has drawn a great many of his Rules, not only in Poetry, but even in Morality and Politicks, out of the Writings of *Homer*. In Poetry especially, his Authority is to be consider'd of more weight, as he was an able and judicious Critick: And his Essay on Poetry, is, if I mistake not, allow'd to be the most curious and perfect of his Critical Works. If we may believe *Rapin*, there is no arriving at Perfection without the Rules of it. How great, Sir, how happy a Genius must *Homer* then have derived

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from

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from Nature, not only to supply the want of Rules to himself, but to make his Poems the *Standard* whereby all *other* Poets, if they would succeed, ought to regulate themselves?

'Tis a reasonable Presumption, *Aristotle* had the same Opinion; and therefore, for the Benefit of Posterity, reduc'd what flow'd from the natural Genius of \* *Homer*, to standing and general Maxims of writing in *Poesy*. Good Sense, and a genuine way of Thinking, furnish'd the Poet with that Happiness of *Designing*, which the Critick has endeavour'd to teach us, if I may so speak, the *mechanical* Rules of. To this end, he cites several Passages out of *Homer*, as so many *Texts*, whereby he illustrates, proves

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\* Yet in his *Poetic* (Chap. 8.) *Aristotle* seems to question whether *Homer* excell'd by virtue of his innate Genius, or an acquir'd Art: ἢ τὸ διὰ τῆς φύσεως, ἢ διὰ τοῦ τέχνης.

and

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and establishes the Fundamentals he lays down of the Poetical System, and that, generally, after an incontestible manner; yet this decisive Authority granted by *Aristotle* to our Poet, is not of so dangerous Consequence to *Poetry* as it was to *Religion*, to appeal to him, as an Oracle, for the Resolution of Doubts, the determining *Cases of Conscience*, and Confirmation of moral Principles; to which end, as *Janaquil Faber* tells us, his Poems were frequently cited.

*Aristotle* took care to instil the great Sentiments he had of *Homer* into the Mind of his Royal Charge; and probably we not only owe to his Advice, that *Homer's* Poems were commanded by *Alexander* to be Revis'd and Corrected by the great Men about him, but to his Assistance, that the Edition of the *Casket* (for so that of *Alexander* was call'd) came forth after a more

B 2                      care.

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careful and exact Collation. The *Hero* himself is said indeed to have assisted at the Work, and thought it not below the Dignity of a *Conqueror*, on so important an Occasion, to become a *Transcriber*. *Madam Dacier* says, but does not say from what Authority, that he transcrib'd the whole Work, as it came corrected to him, with his own Hand.

Besides the Reasons *Alexander* had in common for setting so high an Esteem upon *Homer*, he more especially honour'd him as a Person who very well understood the *Art* of War, and had laid down many useful Instructions towards the Improvement of it. *Ælian* says, He was the first to whom we owe the Theory of Military Order: Τὸ πᾶν κλυτὸν δειπνῶν. By which he more particularly intends, the right Method of Drawing up an Army, of assigning the several Battalions which

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which compose it their proper Posts; or, to speak the common Dialect, of putting the Battle in Array. It was in regard to this Quality of *Homer*, that *Alexander* laid the *Iliad* with his Sword, every Night he went to Bed, under his Head, calling it, the *Plan of Martial Discipline*; and from hence it has been concluded that this *Hero* propos'd to form himself upon *Homer's* Model. *Rapin* says expressly, it was from this great Original *Alexander* became so *Valiant*. We may observe here an Instance of the Caution wherewith that excellent Critick usually draws his Characters. *Valour* was eminently the Character of this Prince, and which no body will dispute to him. But his *Conduct* is not on all Occasions to be examin'd too nicely by the Rules of Military Prudence: Nay, he sometimes prov'd Victorious against all the Rules of it.



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So that if there be any good Foundation for what the Criticks observe, that the Design of *the Iliad* is to describe and exemplify bodily Strength, of *the Odyssey*, Prudence and Subtility of Mind; *Alexander* the Great seems rather to have taken the former of these Poems for his *Model*. You will not, Sir, yourself deny, that his Success was sometimes owing to a happy *Temerity*, and not always to a *Courage* well conducted.

Yet this Distinction of the two Poems, from the different Scope of them, is not to be extended too far. In the *Iliad*, the Characters of *Nestor* and *Ulysses* are drawn in a Light which shews the Force of Military, and on many Occasions of Civil Prudence, to the greatest Advantage. If the principal Design of this Poem, which I shall not dispute, be to give us an Idea of Martial Prowess, it is a Prowess which we  
are

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are never to draw into Example, contrary to the Reasons of Policy, or the more publick and desirable Ends of Peace.

There are many beautiful Passages of the *Iliad*, wherein *Homer* takes occasion to discover the ill Effects of a Spirit breathing nothing but *War*, tho' supported with the greatest natural Courage. Thus *Agamemnon* is introduced reproaching *Achilles*, as delighting only in Tumults, and placing his greatest Glory and Happiness in being a publick Incendiary; in creating Jealousies, and inflaming Divisions. *Jupiter*, in another Place, is represented ascending the God of War: himself much after the same manner: He charges *Mars* directly as a *Homicide*, as destructive of mortal Race, and embruing his Hands in human Blood; which yet every Prince contracts the Guilt of, that enters into an unjust War, or pro-

B 4                    secutes

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secutes it, when Peace may be had on good Terms; and every Person in proportion, as he is concern'd in advising or carrying on such a War, or in embarrassing the Methods that are employ'd to put a Period to it. \* *Jupiter*, on another Occasion, impeaches *Mars* of *Inconstancy*, of changing Sides, of deserting the Cause of his Friends, and going over to that of his Enemies; in a word, of having no true or standing Principle of Fidelity or Honour; but desiring chiefly to distinguish himself by reaping the Spoils of War, or appearing at the Head of publick Factions. Upon which Occasion, *Enstathius* has this judicious Remark, That to love War is not the Character wherein a Hero's Glory consists; he ought, if he would recommend

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\* Ἀλλὰ πρὸς αὐτὸν, the Word Homer uses, is capable, according to the Scholts, of any of these Senses.

him-

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himself to the Esteem of wise Persons, to make War, where Necessity requires, or it is incumbent on him, but not out of Choice, or an Inclination arising from any private Motive of *Avarice*, or *Ambition*.

CAN we, Sir, have a clearer Proof, that the Design of the *Iliad* is not to give us an Idea of Courage in Opposition to the Maxims of Military Conduct? It is no less evident, that in the Judgment of *Homer*, a Martial is not only consistent with a *pacifick* Disposition, but ought never to be separated from it. A Hero, the Bent of whose Inclination is wholly turn'd upon War, upon what Motive soever it arises, no more comes up to his true Character, than a Critick, whose principal End is to run down, to bite and devour his Authors. The true and laudable End of Criti-

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cism is to shew, in a good Light, the Beauties of a Writer, as that of War is to procure to us the Blessings of Peace, and enable us to cultivate the Arts of it.

What then was the Ground of that high Esteem, which *Alexander* professed for the Writings of *Homer*, and for the *Iliad* in particular; seeing it does not appear, that he propos'd to regulate his Conduct by it. Pardon me, Sir, a Conjecture upon which, 'tis not unreasonable to suppose, this Esteem might be founded. An insatiable Love of Glory was *Alexander's* predominant Passion. One signal Instance hereof was, a violent desire he had of being thought the Son of *Jupiter Ammon*. Nothing could tend more to facilitate the belief of this Story, than the Legends we meet with, of the same kind, in *Homer*. Several of his Heroes are of Celestial

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*ſial* Extraction, and there is every where ſo familiar an Entercourse between them, and his Deities of both Sexes, as might render the Affair *Jupiter* is reported to have had with *Olympias*, at leaſt more credible; and ſo make way for the eaſier Eſtabliſhment of *Alexander's* Divinity. Yet, if I may cite a Paſſage from the Memoirs of thoſe Times, founded only upon ſome ſpecious Surmiſes; it is ſaid, that *Maſſanebo* King of *Egypt*, a Magician and Aſtrologer, Characters almoſt inſeparable, having by his Skill in Conjuring and the Stars, foreſeen that his Subjects would one day Rebel and Dethrone him, he reſolved, by way of prevention, and as having the leſs Danger and Diſgrace in it, voluntarily to lay down and *Abdicate* the Kingdom. Upon this he repairs to *Philip* King of *Macedon*, puts himſelf upon the Favour of that Prince, and

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and is generously received and entertained by him. But, for his own part, very *ungenerously* improves the Occasion, to dishonour *Philip* in the most sensible Parts, by gaining access to his Lady, in the shape of *Jupiter Ammon*; as *Mundus* afterwards, by a like Artifice, vitiated *Paulina* in that of the God *Anubis*. But this, Sir, is only mentioned as part of the Secret History of that Court, and as deserving no more Credit than any Novel, which goes under the Name in our own.

In Justice to *Olympias*, for we cannot be too much concerned on all Occasions to vindicate the Honour of her Sex, it ought to be observed, that she was a stranger to this Imposture, and expressed a due Resentment against her Son, for affecting so much to have it pass upon the World. For thus she rallies him in one of her  
Letters.

*A Prefatory Epistle.* 37

**L**etters. " You ought to be very  
" cautious how you expose me  
" to the Jealousy and Revenge  
" of *Juno*, whom yet I never in-  
" jur'd. Tho' this Lady, if the  
best Historians have not much in-  
jur'd her, wanted not the Vanity,  
had there been any Foundation  
for it, to have credited a Story  
herself, which, according to the  
Theology of those Days, would  
have brought no great Disgrace  
upon Her.

Not only Heroes and Philoso-  
phers, but the wisest and most  
celebrated of Lawgivers, have had  
*Homer* in great Veneration. *Ly-  
curgus* was at the Pains to tran-  
scribe intire Copies of his Works  
which he found in *Ionia*, and to  
bring them into *Greece*, which  
was the first Edition of them in  
those Parts. *Solon*, on all occasions,  
shewed no less Regard to him,  
and particularly enacted, that the  
Reciters



### 38 *A Prefatory Epistle.*

Reciters in the *Panatheneans*, should make Use of his Verses. But I barely mention these great Men. The Judgment of *Plato*, concerning our Poet, will require to be more copiously and distinctly considered; for tho' this Philosopher speaks of him in very high and magnificent Terms, calling him the most perfect and divine of Poets; the Master and Prince of Tragedians, † and the finest Poetical Genius; yet at other times he attacks the Reputation of his Friend, for so he acknowledges *Homer*, with all the Ardor and Spirit of an Enemy. But on that very Account, his Authority, so far as he speaks to the Poet's Advantage, is of the more Weight and Importance to us.

What the particular Objections are, which this Philosopher has

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† ΠΟΙΗΤΙΚΟΤΑΤΟΝ

*A Prefatory Epistle.* 39

raised against *Homer*, will be severally considered in their proper Place. It may suffice, at present, to say in general, that they are more plausible and ingenious, than solid. One of the two, which I shall here take Notice of, is so weak, that I am surprized to think how it should come from so great and wise a Man.

He objects then, that if *Homer's* Poems had been so excellent, so useful as was pretended to instruct, or reform the World, 'tis strange he found no more Friends to do him Honour, and take Care of his Interests. This Prejudice is grounded on a Supposition, than which there is nothing in Fact more frequently contradicted. Were we to proceed upon it, in determining the Merits of those who handle the Pen, a great Number of the best Writers must be banish'd the Commonwealth of Learning,

#### 40 *A Prefatory Epistle.*

Learning, as *Homer* was that of *Plato*. The Poets especially will rise up against this Philosopher, for bringing so general a Disgrace upon them. They will never submit to be tried by a Rule, which seems to have been founded in a particular Prejudice against their Fraternity. Poverty ought not to detract from the Merit of any Person, in any Profession, but to suppose it derogatory to the Merit of a Poet, is in effect to explode and proscribe Poetry itself.

The Philosopher proceeds in pushing his Objection. If *Homer's* Poems had been subservient to the real Advancement of Knowledge or Virtue in the World, he would not have been under a necessity of sauntering about the Country, from Door to Door, reciting his Verses. He could not have wanted a *Patron* among the Rich and the Noble,

*A Prefatory Epistle.* 41

Noble: One or other of them would have called him in, taken him under Protection, and perhaps have made him a *Domestick*, or his Poet à *Latere*. The Force of what is here objected lies in this, that a good Poet can never want Encouragement, or an Opportunity of filling his Pocket. It would have been very acceptable to some of our best Poets, had they found this a standing and unerring Maxim. Hard Fate it is, says Mr. *Cl—s* in a Dedication to the Lord *Ch—t*, that while Poets, like Silkworms, unravel their very Bowels for the Pleasure and Luxury of Mankind, they themselves must be entomb'd in their own Bowels. The Conceit is ingenious enough. But I do not know, while we are celebrating the Praises of a Patron, and ascribing to him all the good Qualities, a great Man ought

42 *A Prefatory Epistle.*

ought to have, whether it may be so proper to remind him of his Duty, except perhaps there be something in his Temper which may render such an Intimation at least the more excuseable.

Yet whatever Complaints have been formerly made, that Poets of the first Distinction were neglected; it may be observed to the Honour of the present Age, they have had, such of them as excel, a more equal Regard paid to them; with a just Taste of polite Learning, an ancient Spirit of Magnificence towards the Favourites of the Muses has reviv'd, whereof, would' you pardon me for naming them, I could name more Instances than one.

But what, Sir, if the very Facts upon which *Plato* raises these Objections against *Homer*, should have no good Foundation? What if this Poet recited his  
Verses

*A Prefatory Epistle.* 43

Verses not out of Necessity, as *Plato* would insinuate ; but in Compliance with a Practice, which was thought no less honorary in those Days, than the Art of Poetizing itself. It were needless to prove that Poets then recited, as they now write, for Fame, and not only for Bread, or if I may use an Expression imported from a Neighbouring Kingdom, to keep the Wolf from the Door.

'Tis to this Purpose observable, that the wise Son of *Syrach* mentions those *who recited Verses in writing*, Ecclus. 44. 5. amongst the great Men of Antiquity, who were most *renowned* for Wisdom and Knowledge themselves, and for the wholesome Instructions they imparted to others. It happens indeed unfortunately for *Plato*, but no less for our Advantage, that in another place *Socrates* is introduced, proving  
after

#### 44 *A Prefatory Epistle.*

after a *formal* and very copious manner, that those, who of old went about reciting of Verses, were no less inspired than the Poets themselves. But how, Sir, can that in *Plato's* Opinion be an Argument against the Excellency of *Homer's* Poems, that very Argument, I say, which *Plato* makes use of to prove *Homer's* Inspiration? If it were no Objection against *Homer's* Verses, that he had the Glory of being inspir'd, it could not for the same Reason be objected to them, according to *Plato*, that he went about reciting them.

'Tis wrong too in *Plato*, and against the Faith of History, that *Homer* found no Patron. The Story of *Mentes* the rich Merchant, who was a Person of Letters and great Ingenuity himself, is well known. He treated *Homer* with a Respect due to his Merit,

*A Prefatory Epistle.* 45

Merit, and made him the Companion of his Travels; and then it was, he became so exactly acquainted with the Situation of the Places through which he passed, and with the Manners and Customs of the Inhabitants, which are described so happily in his Works, and contribute very much to the Beauty, no less than the Usefulness of them. And certainly one considerable use of them, is to teach Gentlemen, who would go abroad to any good Effect, the proper Art and principal End of Travelling.

Neither, if we may believe \* *Seneca*, were the Circumstances of *Homer* so narrow, but that they enabled him to keep a Servant, and from hence this Moralist particularly recommends him as an Example of Frugality. He

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\* De Consol. cap. 12.

supposes



# 46 *A Prefatory Epistle.*

supposes a great and numerous Retinue rather an Incumbrance than of real use to the true End of Living: And confesses himself ashamed of complying with the Luxury of his own Age, against the Rules of primitive Plainness and Simplicity.

But let all, Sir, that has been said upon this Article go for nothing. Let it be granted that *Homer* was poor, and that he recited for this Reason; in a word, that he found no Patron, or Benefactors: Why, all this amounts no more, than that Learning is not equally esteem'd at all Times or by all Persons. The City thro' which *Homer* travell'd was not Inhabited by the Family *Harley*, of *St. John*, or *Bromley*. Therefore *Homer* was no good Poet. This in effect is *Plato's* Argument. Would any one desire better?

He

*A Prefatory Epistle.* 47

How weakly soever *Plato* supported this Objection against *Homer*, from his suppos'd indigent Condition, yet it must be own'd agreeable enough to vulgar Opinion at all times. 'Tis ordinary, and there is indeed great Appearance of Reason as well as Modesty in it, to pay a Deference to whatever is done by our Superiors. Whether it be, that Persons in lower Circumstances are presum'd to want Elevation of Mind? Or under Circumstances which distract the Mind, not to have a due Extent of it? Whatever the Reason be, it is frequently observ'd, that a splendid Fortune, or a great Name, is of more Importance to a Writer, than a good Pen. Persons in a superior Condition have much the same Advantage in Writing, which the wise Son of *Syrach* tells us after an agreeable manner, they have in Speaking.

## 48 *A Prefatory Epistle.*

Speaking. *When, says he, a rich Man speaketh, every Man holdeth his Tongue, and look, what he saith they extol it to the Clouds; but if the poor Man speak, they say, What Fellow is this?* Ecclus. 13. 23. Even in the natural Reason of the thing, it must be granted, that a dead Weight hanging as it were continually on the Spirits, either from any indigent or afflicting Circumstances of Life, cannot but very much impair the Force, and restrain the Activity of a Man's Mind. *Ovid* is a known and remarkable Instance of this. In his Exile, that brisk and generous Spirit, which every where animates what he had writ before, does on all Occasions, when he has the greatest need of it, forsake him; and the most he can do, is to give his Versification a smooth and easy Turn, or now and then to strike out into some pert and agreeable Essay of Wit. The

*A Prefatory Epistle.* 49

The other Article which *Plato* brings against *Homer*, is more specious, and not without a reasonable Foundation ; it is the principal Article he grounds his Edict upon, for discharging the Poet his Commonwealth. But he discharges him with Circumstances of Solemnity, and in the most respectful manner ; he conducts him out with the highest Marks of Honour, or rather indeed of *Royalty* ; He anoints his Head with Oil, and sets a Crown upon it.

But to examine the Charge it self ; *Plato*, that he might avoid a popular Odium from the great Reputation Poetry was then in, and on Account of the Dishonour he had done it in several Respects before, does in the Tenth Book of his *Utopian Republick*, gather his whole Strength, as it were, into one decisive Blow,

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and

## 50 *A Prefatory Epistle.*

and maintains in particular, that Poetry is dangerous to the Society he had form'd, consider'd *as an Art of Imitation*. The Reason he gives is, that it draws the Images not only of Actions that are commendable and praiseworthy, but of such as are infamous; and that \* *weak Minds are not furnish'd with an Antidote strong enough against the Poyson such Images are apt to infuse; being unable to distinguish what Actions deserve their Imitation, and what are unworthy of it.* He had before produc'd several Instances out of *Homer* to this Purpose, which there was therefore no Occasion for him here to repeat. Thus, particularly in the Third Book, he represents the Imbecillity and seeming Despondency of Mind in some of *Homer's* principal Characters, as ha-

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\* Ὅσοι μὴ ἔχουσιν φάρμακον τὸ εἰδέναι αὐτὰ  
τοιαῦτα τυγχάνει ὄντα.

ving

*A Prefatory Epistle.* 51

ving a bad Influence to emasculate his Readers, and make them of a mean and abject Spirit, unable to Support themselves under Misfortunes with a becoming Bravery and Resolution. Let us, says he, not admit of such ignoble and whining Lamentations, but leave them to weak Minds, or to the weaker Sex, tho' not to the more generous of them neither. The excess of Grief and Indignation *Achilles* gives himself up to, and the variety of odd and disconsolate Postures *Homer* represents that Hero in, do here afford the Philosopher, with all his Gravity, a fine Vein of Railery.

Yet 'tis granted, Sir, this Argument of *Plato* is designed in general against the principal Art of Poetry it self, which is to describe Vice on occasion as well as Virtue, in lively and proper Colours.

## 52 *A Prefatory Epistle.*

lours. Tho' 'tis more particula  
and by direct Application, level  
against *Homer*, as he was ha  
above all other Poets, in desc  
ing things accurately, and to  
Life. He was therefore proscri  
by *Plato*, for the same Rea  
the *Athenians* enacted the Law  
*Ostracism*, on account of a st  
ing and superior, but *danger*  
Merit.

And if I may be permitt  
Sir, to give you my Thoughts  
this Article, where Poetry is  
very Chaste both in the Ser  
ment and Language; it may  
be a Question whether we h  
not better want those beauti  
Images in it, which move a  
gratify the Passions, than that  
Heart should be in any dang  
of being Betray'd or Corrupt  
by them. As it would be mu  
more for the Advantage of R  
igion, that we should be wi  
c

*A Prefatory Epistle.* 53

out some of the learned and ingenious *Roman* Casuists, than that they should have display'd their Invention in finding out such nice and curious Cases, as rather tend to fill the Mind with impure Speculations, than to direct the Conscience. However, as the Design of *Plato* was to make Men entirely submit to the Government of Reason, and to teach a more just and refin'd way of Reasoning on clear Idea's, he acted very agreeably to his Design, in discarding an Art which is principally, and in the great Beauties of it, address'd to the *Imagination*.

Yet, as *Homer*, Sir, was very Chaste in his Descriptions, as the humane Actions of ill Example, which he relates, are barely related, tho' in a proper and lively manner; as he uses no artificial Colours to recommend them to



## 54 *A Prefatory Epistle.*

our Imitation, but leaves them to speak for themselves ; We must seek for some other Reason upon which *Plato* thought this Poet so highly dangerous to his Establishment. And this Reason I take to have been founded in the Images *Homer* makes, not from the Manners of his Heroes or human Characters, but of his Deities. When Persons of superior Condition, are wanting in the Decorum which ought to be observed in their Conduct, or when they fail in any Point of strict Morality, their Example is of less dangerous Influence, because we consider them as Men, and that their Irregularities proceed from a Weakness, whereof they are, or ought to be ashamed. But when a Deity, which an Idea of Perfection must be suppos'd to accompany, is brought down from Heaven ruffled with the most indecent

*A Prefatory Epistle.* 55

decent of humane Passions, or engaging in some criminal or unworthy Design, this is an Example at once shocking to the Understanding, and contagious to the Heart; and which seems indeed not so much to excuse, as to authorize and justify the like Passions and Disorders, in a less perfect Order of Beings. It appears, at first View, highly reasonable, Mortals should not only draw the Rules of Life from the Deities they Worship, but that they should Worship them in a manner agreeable to their Attributes. 'Tis natural for Men to imitate what they admire, and to think such an Imitation innocent at least, if not in some Degree laudable. Upon this Occasion *Minutius Felix* argues very well against the Theology of the Heathen World, and particularly that of *Homer*, as dangerous at once to confound

56 *A Prefatory Epistle.*

all true Notions of Religion and Morality, and to introduce the most impious and immoral Practices.

'Tis granted, Sir, *Plato* in his Tenth Book, where he principally insists on the Danger of Poetry as an Art of Imitation, does not directly charge *Homer* with ascribing to his Gods Manners unworthy of them. He had made this a special Article of Impeachment against the Poet in his Third Book, and brought several Instances out of him to prove it. Not to mention the rest of them, he animadverts upon *Homer*, for giving *Vulcan* the Air and Manner of a Buffoon; upon which he becomes the Jest of the other Gods, and raises a *Laugh* among them. But *Plato* might also on this Occasion have attack'd *Homer*, not only for representing his Deities out of Character, but for not observing

*A Prefatory Epistle.* 57

serving a fundamental Law of Epick Poetry, and wherein one proper Distinction of it consists; which is, that it should be grave and magnificent throughout. The same Rule holds with respect to Tragedy, which is only a different Consideration of Epick Poetry; and for this Reason Tragi-Comedy has been condemn'd by the best Modern Criticks, as designing to raise Passions of a quite different Nature, and by that means breaking the Tide of each of them, and so, by consequence, frustrating its own Design. But 'tis hop'd the good Sense of the *English* Nation will never give Encouragement to any such Motley and inconsistent Performance again. If Terror and Commiseration be the principal End of Tragedy, the higher those Passions are wound up, and the less diverted, the more perfect certainly must the Poem be.

## 58 *A Prefatory Epistle.*

But there was a particular Reason, why *Plato* should not too often recite such Passages out of *Homer*, as reflected on the Theology of those Times, and the Religion establish'd by the Laws. The divine *Plato* was not without human Passions : He had before his Eyes the Sufferings of his great Master *Socrates*, for declaring himself so openly in the Cause of the one true God. *Plato*, in what he says concerning the Simplicity of the Divine Nature, not only discovers the same Sentiments upon this fundamental Article of Religion, but explains and demonstrates it after a most sublime and perspicuous manner. He proceeds Methodically from it to that of the Immutability of God, and from hence to his Veracity ; and upon these several Attributes has perhaps as great Thoughts as ever entered

*A Prefatory Epistle.* 59

enter'd, without Revelation, into the Mind of Man.

If *Plato*, Sir, were not so far influenced by his Principles as to make them the Rule of his Practices; if he became an Occasional Conformist to the Religion of his Country; and made shew of an exterior Compliance with the Established Forms of it, which yet he condemned both in his private Judgment, and interpretatively in his Writings. In a word, if he consulted his Ease, Safety and Interest more than the satisfying of his own Mind; why, tho' nothing can be said from humane Weakness and Corruption to justify or excuse such a Conduct; yet we the less wonder at it in a Heathen; when we have known Christians not only so Corrupt as in effect to follow it, but so weak, as by necessary Construction publicly to defend it. There are at least  
more

60 *A. Prefatory Epistle.*

more favourable Allowances to be made a Philosopher recovering himself by the Natural Light of his own Mind, out of the dark State of Heathenism, than to one who enjoys the Benefit of Divine Revelation, and especially where 'tis profess'd and taught in its greatest Purity.

How blameable soever *Plato* was in his Practise, it must however be granted him, that in decrying the Poets, who were the Theologers of those Days, and in whose Writings the People sought for their Religion, he took a proper Method, tho' indirectly, to destroy Polytheism and Superstition, and to open the Eyes of Men for receiving the great Truths he so frequently lays down, in reference both to Speculation and Practice. In a Commonwealth, which was to subsist on the Foundation of good Principles, and a more pure  
Morality,

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Morality ; What could be more reasonable, than to exclude the Poets, whose Fictions tended so much both to mislead Men into the most dangerous Errors, and to favour the most gross Corruptions?

After all, Sir, *Plato* does not absolutely condemn Poetry ; he allows of Hymns compos'd in Praise of the Gods, and of great Men. But he fears the Consequences of admitting a Muse whose principal Design is to please, and by whose artful and insinuating Address the Force of Reason, the Commanding Power in his Commonwealth, may be broken or dissipated. Nay, he does not object even against the Pleasure which arises from a well-writ Poem, provided the Matter and Diction of it be Chaste and Innocent. I shall only add, that in Quality of a Legislator he does not



## 62 *A Prefatory Epistle.*

not universally prohibit the Reading of the Poets, but only to young Persons, on whose tender Minds ill Impressions are easier made, and who want Capacity to judge well of what they are very much pleas'd with. And therefore in his Book of Laws, he allows only to those who are Fifty Years old, to select such Passages out of the Poets on publick Occasions of Festivity as are grave and decent, and may be sung without offending chaste Ears.

'Tis more especially from this Incapacity in young People of judging right between the real Design and heightning Colours, or, if I may speak so, the Drapery of a Poem, that *Homer* is proscrib'd by the Philosopher.

"Whether, says he, his Fictions  
 " concerning the Gods are to be con-  
 " plain'd Allegorically, or in a literal  
 " Sense."

It

*A Prefatory Epistle.* 63

It cannot then be said, that *Plato* absolutely banish'd Poetry, but only laid it under some wholesome and convenient Restraints: *The Law ceases with the Reasons of it.* A Rule, which obtains in all other Civil Constitutions, was reasonable in that of *Plato*. He had early addicted himself to Poetry, had a Genius for it, and was always a Lover of it in his Heart. But 'twas generous in him to prefer the Good of a Community he had erected, to all private Considerations; and it is more generous in us to ascribe the severe Things he has spoken against Poetry to so noble a Principle, than to say he did it out of Envy; because, as *Ælian* reports, having for some time devoted himself to the Muses, and composed certain Heroick Verses, upon comparing them with *Homer's*, he was conscious of so vast a Desparity, that he condemn'd them to the Flames.

You

## 64 *A Prefatory Epistle.*

You will observe, Sir, that in my humble Opinion, *Plato* had Reason for proscribing *Homer* his Commonwealth; which tho' well regulated in many Respects, did not exclude Pagans from being Members of it, but rather supposes them so; and his Reasons appear still to hold good, in all the Parts of the Pagan and Idolatrous World: tho' where Christianity is profess'd and taught, they lose all their Force, and we have nothing to fear from them.

If the Judgment here made of *Homer's* Poems be thought too bold, besides the Reasons already given for it, I have, Sir, two great Authorities to support it: The first is that of *Dionysius Halicarnassens*, who speaking of the Methods *Romulus* took to reform Religion, applauds that Prince for discarding the fabulous Stories which had been introduc'd from the *Greeks* concerning  
the

*A Prefatory Epistle.* 65

the Heathen Gods, as of the most dangerous Consequence to corrupt both Religion and Morality. But I am further justified by a modern Critick, and so excellent a one, that in the Opinion of *Dryden*, if all other Criticks were lost, he alone is sufficient to teach a-new the Rules of Writing. It is Mr. *Rapin*, who, in his celebrated Elogium of *Homer*, says, that *as he has been in some manner the Author of Paganism, the Religion whereof, he establish'd by his Poems; one may say, that never Prophet had so many Followers as he.*

I shall mention but one Authority more, to shew how much *Homer* has been esteem'd, and that is the famous Critick *Longinus*; who, in his Treatise of the *Sublime*, every where cites him as the great Master, which those that would excel in the several Beauties of it, are to form themselves by. But in giving a Character of this Poet, he discovers

## 66 *A Prefatory Epistle.*

vers a very fine and artful Address: He borrows an Image from himself, to describe the Extent of his own Genius; 'tis that of *Discord*, which *Homer* represents, while walking upon the Earth, as having her Head in Heaven. *Virgil* was so taken with the Beauty of this Image, which yet seems bold enough, that he has transferr'd it to the Description of *Fame*:

*Ingrediturque solo, & caput inter  
nubila condit;*

Which comes very near to a verbal Translation of that Line in the *Iliad*,

Οὐρανὸν ἑρπύξῃ ἤρην καὶ ὄνι χθονὶ  
βαῖνα.

But *Longinus*, in the Judgment he makes of *Homer*, is not to be consider'd merely as a Critick that understood the Rules of just Writing, and after *Aristotle* has establish'd

*A Prefatory Epistle.* 67

blish'd many of them on *Homer's* Authority; but, as one to whom the Works of this Poet were so familiar, that his Thoughts and Studies seem to have been in great measure taken up with them. Thus in the celebrated Treatise we have mention'd, he considers him as the most perfect Model of the Sublime. In three others, which we regret the Loss of, he treats concerning his Questions, his Philosophy, and Problems: And these perhaps, if recoverable, might be of as great use to the Learned World as the *Essay*, wherein he lays down the Rules of Writing in the Sublime Style, and after a correct manner. I do not, Sir, hereby intend (if it may be permitted me to resume a Subject which has been touch'd upon already) that the Rules of Writing are not necessary; for nothing is more ordinary, than for Persons of a bold and flowing Invention, to want

68 *A Prefatory Epistle.*

want Judgment; and it is principally in Favour of such Writers, that the Art of Criticism has been so much cultivated and improved: Tho', after all, it may be question'd, whether Rules have so frequently serv'd to correct the Disorders of a bold luxuriant Genius, as to put Men upon Writing without any Genius or Spirit at all. Those who have a natural Vivacity and Strength of Mind (Qualities inseparable in an Epick Poet) will, or at least may write well without Rules; but all the Rules in the World will never enable a Writer to distinguish himself without these Qualities. Nature gives Rules; they are founded originally in the Reason of Things; and therefore a great Genius, in order to discover them, has nothing to do but to consult Reason, and carefully follow the Orders of it. The greatest and first Writers among the  
Anci-

*A Prefatory Epistle.* 69

Ancients, did not before-hand publish the Rules upon which they would Write; but the natural Force of their Minds enabled them to write after a manner, from which the Rules of Writing have been since drawn by the Criticks. But, not to run too far into this Controversy about the Necessity of Rules, and to justify *Longinus* in particular for having left us an excellent Treatise concerning them; let us, Sir, if you think good, come to this Resolution; That tho' Rules are not absolutely necessary to those who are qualified by Nature to write, yet they are very useful to save great Wits, who are not always the most willing to undergo it, the Labour of Attention. And I am humbly of Opinion, that if the Fire and Vivacity of *Shakespeare's* Genius had permitted him to examine every thing he writ with due Application of Mind, he might, with-



70 *A Prefatory Epistle.*

without reading the Criticks, have left his Poems much more correct than we now have them: Tho' did not the Boldness and Beauty of his Conceptions in great measure atone for his Irregularities, we should indeed more easily pardon them to his Want of human Literature. It appears to me a very just Remark of a late ingenious Writer, that \* "The World had  
" seen the fairest Draughts before  
" any settled Rules were given:  
" And perhaps, *continues he*, the  
" Works of the Learned have been  
" more Formal, but not more Correct, since Men wrote according  
" to Art.

But to determine this Question, whether Nature or Art contribute more towards forming a Poet, we need go no farther than the Comparison which *Longinus* makes be-

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\* *Preface to the Dissertation on Reading the Classics.*

*A Prefatory Epistle.* 71

twixt *Apollonius*. and *Homer*; the former of these Poets was more exact in observing Rules, and very rarely offended against them. *Homer*, what as Sovereign of the Poets might better be granted him, assumes on Occasion a despotick Power, and sets his Prerogative above Laws. Yet there is no Dispute which of these two was the greater in all the beautiful and shining Qualities of a Poet. I do not know, Sir, whether we might not form something of a like Comparison between *Johnson* and the other of our own Poets I have just named. *Ben.* certainly understood the Laws of Dramatick Writing much better, was more regular in his Compositions, and had a good Stock of human Literature. *Shakespear* had nothing but Nature to draw from; yet tho' his Writings are not nicely to be examin'd by the Rules

## 72 *A Prefatory Epistle.*

Rules of *Aristotle*, he every where entertains his Readers with rich and noble Sentiments; like the great Lights of the *Gentile* World, who liv'd under a mere State of Natural Religion; their own Reason discovered to them many excellent Truths and Principles of Morality, yet for want of a fix'd and standing Rule of Life, which can only be had with Certainty from Revelation, they fail'd very much with respect to their Notions of Moral Virtue in particular Instances. Shall we, Sir, consider *Shakespear* in relation to Poetry, as we do the Heathen Moralists in reference to Religion, and not condemn him too rigorously by a Law he was ignorant of. If after this I cite the following Words of *Horace* upon the present Article.

—*Ego nec studium sine divite vena,  
Nec rude quid profit video Ingenium.*

It

*A Prefatory Epistle.* 73

It is not so much for the sake of a known and popular Authority, as in regard to what Mr. *Trapp* in his \* fine Essay on the Nature and Origin of Poetry, has taken occasion to observe upon it. Among other Observations he has this pertinent One ; That we often admire and commend a Poet, who writes with Wit and Spirit, tho' he be a Stranger to the Rules of Art ; but without that Flame and Force of Mind which constitute the Poetical Genius, how faithfully soever a Pretender to Poetry keep to his Rules, we either throw him by with Contempt, or read him with Disfast. We blame indeed the Remissness and Negligence of the former, but we cannot, without some kind of Indignation, bear the labour'd and *regular* Dullness of the latter. I shall add nothing further to shew,

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\* *Prælectiones Poeticae.* P. 42.

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that

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that tho' Nature and Rules are both necessary towards finishing a Poet, yet a natural Genius is far superior to all the Advantages of Art without it.

But while I am talking of Rules, Sir, I would be thought in some Measure to keep within them my self; and having done with my Authorities, am next to discharge my Promise of acquainting you how far, and in what respects, I apprehended this Design might be useful.

Tho' *Homer* has been Commented upon by a great many learned Men, who, as their Genius or Method of Study led them, have taken his Works as it were to pieces, and severally consider'd him with respect to his Stile, his Grammar, his Philosophy and Geography, and almost all the bright and proper Characters of an Author; yet none, that I know, has written a Critick  
upon

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upon him, so useful as might be wish'd, and which presents us in one intire View with a Draught of his greatest Beauties. *Eustathius* indeed has publish'd immense Comments upon him; But besides that, the Criticisms of this excellent and learned Archbishop are not always just, they are mix'd with Observations of little Importance, wherein he is also thought too tedious and diffuse. So that we cannot come so readily as might be wish'd, at those very beautiful Reflections which frequently occur in him, but are taken up by the way with certain Grammatical Niceties, which yet are not altogether useless, tho' a labour'd Criticism upon Words is never more out of place than upon an Author, wherein *all things* are great, entertaining and instructive. Add to this, that the good and learned Archbishop wrote

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in a Language, which is not now understood by all those, who may be curious enough to have the Beauties of *Homer* observed to them in their own Language.

It is the more necessary to explain the Writings of *Homer*, in order to illustrate several Passages, we meet with in the best of human Authors, that allude or refer to him. *Plato*, tho' he does not on all Occasions treat *Homer* with the Regard he professes for him, yet owes a great many beautiful Thoughts to him, and perhaps some of the brightest in his Works. *Aeschylus*, as *Athenæus* reports, acknowledged that his Tragedies were in the main compos'd of the Fragments which he gather'd up from *Homer's* Table. Those that are the least acquainted with *Virgil* know, that he has not only copy'd after *Homer* in several other Places, but in almost all the  
common

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*common Places* of Poetry; which *Scaliger*, in order to render *Virgil* superior upon the Comparison, has made a large Collection of from them both; Tho' this Hypercritick, for so by the Title of one of his Essays he has authorized us to call him, does on many Occasions discover his Partiality more than his Judgment. I might farther observe, that *Aristotle* too has several References to our Poet, which are capable of receiving a great deal both of Light and Beauty, by comparing them with the Original. I shall but produce one Instance out of him; and the rather, because it relates to the Subject of Morality, which I desire may always be of the first Consideration in my Remarks. This Philosopher in his *Ethicks*, advises us with respect to Pleasure, to approve and apply the Judgment of the old Gen-

D 3            tlemen



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tlemen of *Troy* concerning *Helen*.  
 The Thought is intelligible in  
*Aristotle*, but certainly makes a  
 far greater Impression, when we  
 examine it by the Passage, upon  
 which it bears; 'Tis in the Third  
 Book where *Priam*, with several  
 grave Courtiers about him, whom  
 Age had exempted from the Duty  
 and Toils of War; and fitted for  
 Counsel, were deliberating upon  
 the Means of procuring a speedy  
 Peace. But, upon the approach  
 of *Helen*, are so charm'd with  
 her Mein and Beauty, that they  
 forget all the Calamities they were  
 considering to find a Period of,  
 and cease to wonder how so fine  
 a Woman, *who might with Goddesses*  
*in form compare*, had been the  
 Occasion of so long a War. How-  
 ever, after a conscious Whisper,  
 recollecting themselves, they ad-  
 vise *Priam* to prevent the fatal  
 Consequences of detaining her  
 longer,

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longer, beautiful and lovely as she is, to let her go : As in the design of *Aristotle*, we should always oppose the Danger or Scandal which *Pleasure* may terminate in to the flattering Caresses where-with she makes her first Advances. But if I may, Sir, be allowed to give my Opinion of the Original Passage itself, perhaps there is not any one, in any of the Poets, nor even in *Homer*, that describes Beauty more to the Life, or discovers the Force of it by a more artful and insinuating Address. An *Assembly* of aged Counsellors, superannuated from all other Service, upon sight of *Helen* are represented as forgetting the Affair for which they were *Assembled*, tho' of the last Consequence to themselves, their Country and Posterity.

Sometimes we meet with References in Authors, which 'tis

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not only proper to recur to *Homer* for the Illustration of, but necessary in order to render them intelligible. I shall but produce one Instance to this purpose out of *Martial*, and from that place, where he complains of the excessive Poetical Liberty among the *Greeks*,

*Græci quibus est nihil negatum &  
quos "Απερ, "Απερ, decet sonare.*

Where he alludes to that Line in the fifth *Iliad*, "Απερ, "Απερ, Βρον-  
λοιγέ — but without knowing that he alludes to it, his Meaning would be at the best very obscure. Tho' it may be question'd, Sir, whether this or any other Liberty *Martial* could have objected to the *Greek* Poets, be so extravagant as that he allows himself, when for the sake of his Versification, and contrary, if I mistake not, to the Faith of all other

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other Writers, he makes the second Syllable in *Porfenna* of short Quantity ;

*Hanc spectare manum Porfena non potuit.* Sc.

Human Authors do not only abound with References and Allusions to *Homer*, but also the Christian Fathers, especially of the first Centuries, and in particular *Justin Martyr*. But I would avoid as much as possible, the Pomp and Pedantry of Quotation. Those who will consult *Duport's Gnomologia*, may easily Collect numerous Instances to confirm what is here observ'd.

I suppos'd, Sir, it might be of further use to publish Critical Remarks on *Homer*, as he is usually, if not every where, read at School by those, who would be thought to have any share of a liberal or learned Education. The

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ordinary Business of Masters, and which they primarily intend, is to teach Boys the Grammatical Construction, the Language and Phraseology of this Author ; to make them capable of rendering him in their Native Tongue ; or of imitating him in the Purity and Propriety of his Diction. But the Knowledge of Words and Phrases is only necessary to the Communication of our Thoughts, and the Knowledge of Things. And tho' *Homer* is highly to be admir'd for these and all other Beauties of Stile, yet his Sentiments are still more admirable for the Entertainment and Instruction they afford us ; especially at an Age when this Poet is usually read, and a competent Skill in the Language suppos'd, it may be proper to engage Youth in the more manly and generous Exercise of their Thoughts upon him, and to shew them

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them those Master-Strokes of his Wit, wherein he shines and ought to be imitated. 'Tis an Error to think that to be able to render *Homer* in *Latin* or *English* is to understand him. Tho' he is one of the most clear and perspicuous Writers in the World, yet his Design and the Sublimity of his Thoughts are not always discoverable at first View. Those who are the greatest Masters of his Language will confess the oftner they have read him, they have still observ'd in him something new, admirable and surprizing. If what I have to say upon him may contribute to give his younger Readers a more just Idea of his Excellencies, and make them more in Love with him, I shall be sufficiently justified in my Undertaking, tho' I had engaged in it upon no other Motive.

Yet

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Yet give me leave, Sir, to mention one further Motive, and which had indeed the greatest Weight of all with me, and that is from the good use which may be made of him with respect to the great Principles of Morality. The Knowledge of humane Authors is not only Ornamental, but necessary to Divines. We may at least take a desultory Taste of their Elegancies, and select what is most useful and relishing in them. It may be observ'd, that the greater Lights of the Church, in all Ages, have been those who were more Conversant in the politer Parts of human Literature; and we may extend the Observation to the best and greatest of our *English* Preachers.

Now the great Conceptions of the Deity of a Providence of Moral Virtue in all its Branches, which discover themselves in *Ho-*

*mer,*

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*mer*, seem to raise his two Poems, like the two Summits upon *Parnassas*, above the common Level of human Writers. Tho' I am far from thinking with *Mr. Barnes* (if it be true, he prepar'd a *Latin* Dissertation to prove it) that the Books which go under *Homer's* Name, were written by the Divine Author of *Ecclesiastes*; Notwithstanding the Conformity of his Sentiments, and sometimes of his Phrazeology, with those both of *Solomon* and *David*. From whence 'tis only probable, according to the best Calculation, that *Homer* lived about the Time of these inspir'd Writers, and had seen their Works. *Mr. Barnes* his Conjecture is however full as probable as that of *Gronovius*, who wrote a Treatise formally to prove, that *Rameliab* was the same with *Romulus* the Founder of *Rome*. But both these Con-  
jectures



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jectures are much stronger Proof  
 that a learned Man, like those of  
 other Professions, may sometimes  
 affect a *Nostrum*, and one pecu-  
 liar Scheme or other of distin-  
 guishing himself. Whether this  
 proceeds from an Ambition to  
 advance something new and sur-  
 prizing; or from the Vanity of  
 asserting Paradoxes; or of shew-  
 ing that the Author is able to  
 say something upon any thing  
 or from whatsoever other Cause;  
 the Observation is founded on  
 too many, and frequent Facts.  
 But the greatest Danger is, when  
 Men of a warm and headstrong  
 Imagination set up for *Theorists*,  
 or Discoverers; at the same time  
 they are hurry'd away with the  
 Force of it, they are apt to push,  
 and carry others along with them.  
 There is a Contagion of Mind, as  
 well as of Body, which spreads  
 it self in Conversation and Books,  
 like

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like a poysonous Vapour in the Air; and we may frequently observe, that there are Persons who perswade more by the Confidence and bold Air wherewith they deliver themselves, than others who are less assuming, with all the Strength of just and strict Reasoning. I do not know, Sir, whether the Growth of *Quakerism*, or of any other *Enthusiasm*, can be so well accounted for, as from this Contagion of Imaginations; which was so strong at the first, as to cause strange Agitations and Distortions of the Body, and to infect the Mind to a certain degree of Madness. But as Epidemical Distempers commonly lose their Malignity, when they are come to the Heighth; so the *Quakers* are in great Measure recovered from their first Phrenzy and Infatuation, and we find them something at least more capable of

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of being reason'd with. The same Observation may be extended to the late *Camisars* ; only as the Spirit wherewith they were agitated, and impell'd one another, was not altogether so strong as that of *Fox* and *Nailor*, and their immediate Followers ; the Infection of it neither spread so wide, nor was attended with so lasting and dangerous Effects. This Remark, Sir, is highly agreeable to the Characters Ecclesiastical Historians give us of the Principal *Heresiarchs*, and of such as have been in any Respect, the great Disturbers of the Church's Peace. They were usually Men of a Spirit naturally Refractory, and of a bold domineering Imagination, with a competent share of Learning, Volubility of Tongue, and much Profession of exterior Sanctity. It must be granted, a Person so qualified, may easily, I had almost said:

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said mechanically convey into weak Imaginations the Spirit and Malignity of his own. But would People, who have any Strength or Liberty of Mind, only consider when they think themselves Convinced, what it is they are Convinced of, and by what cogent Reasons, they would much sooner learn to distinguish between just Reasoning and confident Talking, and be in less Danger from the *contagious* Force of it.

I shall endeavour, Sir, to make Amends for this Digression, by observing to you the just Sentiments *Homer* had, both with respect to his Theology and Morals. Without entering here into the Question, whether what he says concerning the Gods, ought to be explain'd in an allegorical Sense; 'tis certain he acknowledg'd a Supreme Deity, and speaks of him after a manner,  
in

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sole Operation of his *Word*. It may be further observ'd, to the Advantage of *Homer*, that he is perhaps the only Writer, Heathen or Christian, who to make us conceive of that Divine Power, whereby God governs the World, in a more noble and worthy Manner; never makes use of the Term *Fortune*, tho' sometimes indeed, he employs that of *Fate*; whereby he does not yet intend a Stoical and necessary Concatenation of all Causes and Events, but only the settled Order of Providence, conducted by infinite Wisdom and Goodness. *Virgil*, who knew so well how to transfer the great and beautiful Sentiments of *Homer*, speaks of the Divine Power much after the same Manner. Thus he represents *Nep-  
tune* calming the Rage of the Sea while he was commanding it to be calm, or rather before his Command could be perfectly deliver'd.

*Sic*

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*Sic ait, & dicto citius, tumida  
aquora placat.*

Which therefore Mr. Dryden does not fully come up to in his Translation.

*He spoke, and while he spoke, he  
calm'd the Seas.*

Homer asserts the Power of God, not only in Words, but in ascribing to him Actions the most significant and expressive of it. When *Thetis* addresses Herself to *Jupiter*, that he would revenge the Indignities done to her Son *Achilles*, he says no more directly in Answer to her Request, but, that he will ratify it with a *Nod*, the sure and infallible Sanction of what he designs, and which nothing can frustrate or reverse. But the Manner wherein *Jupiter* is represented making this divine Signal with the Motion of his Head, has something in it  
fo

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*Scaliger* too should have known, there are a thousand Things we need not be inform'd of as to their Existence; and yet the different Manner or Dress, wherein they are presented to the Mind, give it very different Motions and Sentiments. And the Image wherewith *Phidias* was struck in the Poetry of these Lines, while it was fresh and vigorous on his Imagination, might very naturally transfer itself into his Painting. This Reflection I am insensibly fall'n upon, concerning *Homer's* Choice and Disposition of proper Words to express the Things he design'd, is particularly infilted upon by *Dionysus Halicarnassens* \*, and in a very clear and judicious Manner; but he only instances in those Lines of the *Odyssy* † where *Sisyphus* is represented heaving up a huge Stone

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\* *De Colloc. Verbor.*

† *O.l.* 11. 592.

against

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against a craggy Ascent; which he has no sooner push'd to the Top; but it comes tumbling down again upon him. The Author of the *Critick on Milton* has cited these Lines on the same Occasion, and observes, that none of the Criticks before him had taken Notice of it. I thought, Sir, *Dionysius Halicarnassens* had always been allow'd a Critick, and of the first Distinction. But I rather suppose this slight Escape might proceed from a Forgetfulness more incident to great Wits; than from an Affectation, almost common to all Writers, and especially the Criticks, of making new Discoveries.

But I return, Sir, as I propos'd, to instance in the Purity of *Homer's* Morals. One material Evidence whereof, and which I shall only produce at present, is, the Purity of his Language in Opposition to Grossness and Ribaldry: He is  
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highly to be admir'd for the great Decorum, every where observed by him, in what relates to Love and Beauty ; Subjects wherein Poets, and all other Writers of a lively Imagination, are most apt to offend against the Rules of Decency. His Words are always chaste, and, except perhaps in one or two Passages, which may admit of greater Latitude, his Sentiments. The most impure Image in him is, where he describes an accidental and very unexpected Interview *Jupiter* had with *Juno*. Upon this Occasion, *Jupiter* expresses an Impatience, and holds a Conversation with the Goddess, which I dare by no means undertake to defend the Regularity of. But then, as if *Homer* had foreseen the Offence that might be taken at so exceptionable a Scene, he took Care to excuse it by giving *Juno* all the Beauty and Advantages, a Goddess was capable of  
by

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by Nature or Art: As *Virgil*, with a like Address, in some measure excuses the Indiscretion of *Dido*, by interesting both Heaven and Earth to work up her Passion to an irregular height. Yet if there be not always that Delicacy in the Sentiments of *Homer*, upon the Subject of Love, which we sometimes observe in Persons of a very inferior Genius; This is not so much to be objected as a Fault to him, as of the Age wherein he wrote: The Simplicity of Manners in those Days might render many Freedoms of Conversation and Behaviour inoffensive, which at present would perhaps appear very disagreeable, if not altogether shocking. But if it sometimes happen, that when the Ear is most chaste, the Heart is most corrupt; if it be true, (what there is great Reason to suspect) that People of the nicest Address have not always the most vertuous

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Inclinations; you will still agree with me, Sir, that the ancient Simplicity is highly preferable to our modern Politeness. After all, Sir, our modern Poets are not ordinarily so very chaste or polite, as to have any Advantage, in this respect, upon the Comparison, with either *Homer* or *Virgil*. The later of these Poets especially, since I have nam'd him, is not inferior to *Milton* himself in describing the Passion and Effects of Love after a distant, but sensible and lively manner. They have both of them, like *Homer*, the Secret of conveying tender and moving Sentiments to the Heart, without offending the Ear. Before that fatal Adventure of *Dido*, which ruin'd her, we have the Force of this Passion represented, with all the Art and Address imaginable; but there, the Poet barely relates the Action, and in few Words, without giving us any  
Image

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Image of it, leaves it to speak for itself. He had taken Care before, to cover, as much as possible, *Dido's* Disgrace, by a Concurrence of all the Circumstances, which could be suppos'd to betray her into the Occasion of it..

From this Conduct and Precaution of *Virgil*, it appears to me he had greater Sentiments of that Virtue, wherein the Glory of the Female Sex consists, than the virtuous *Marcia* herself in the celebrated Tragedy of *Cato*, where she delivers the following Words;

*In sight of all the Virtue we can boast,  
A Woman that deliberates, is lost.*

I do not know, Sir, whether this be any great Complement to the Ladies. We grant, 'tis spoken by a Heathen Lady; but 'tis by one that makes Profession of a rigid and strict Virtue, and which Regard is always to be had to, before a Chri-

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ftian Auditory. Yet why should it be thought absolutely necessary that any Woman *must* fall whenever she happens to make a false Step? Why should not we allow the other Sex a Liberty of Mind, wherein the great *Triumph* of Virtue consists, to resist an Inclination, they might at first have indiscreetly entertain'd? Tho' were the Words to be understood *only* as a Caution to the Ladies, against all indecent or irregular Advances upon the first Motions of Love, the Author's Design had been very just; but then he ought to have spoken them *as* a Caution, and not in Terms so general as appear to turn it into a Reflection.

I cannot, Sir, but here observe, that tho' Mr. *Dryden* was a great Judge of Decency, and all the other Qualifications of a good Poet; yet, the Force of his Imagination frequently carry'd him in the Point I  
am

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am considering, against his Judgment. This is too visible in most of his Writings; but I charge it more particularly upon him here, as in his Translation of the first Book of the *Iliad*, he has been very injurious to *Homer*. Thus where *Agamemnon* is introduc'd declaring his Resolution in the following Words, not to part with *Chryseis*;

Τὼ δ' ἐγὼ εἰ λύσω, &c.

Words that do not convey the least impure or loose Idea to the Mind, and which do not so much as import, that the Hero design'd this Lady for his *Paracoit*; Mr. *Dryden* has this unchast Version:

*Unfold Chryseis shall a Slave remain,  
Till cloy'd with Joys I break the  
useless Chain.*

What he represents *Agamemnon* saying on the same Occasion after-

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wards is so gross, I shall not out of Regard to good Manners transcribe it. The wrong Mr. *Dryden* has done *Homer*, by these Liberties, is the greater, if what *Athenaus* † reports after *Aristotle*, be true, That *Agamemnon*'s keeping a Mistress cannot be collected from any thing this Poet has said, in the whole *Iliad*.

I have now only, Sir, to acquaint you in the last Place, with the Method I propos'd to myself in the following Remarks; which was first, To examine the *Iliad* by the Rules of *Epick* Poetry, and to consider in general the other Poetical Beauties of it; more especially with respect to the noble Simplicity, Harmony and Perspicuity of the Poet's Diction. The latter of these Qualifications is so necessary in all Writers who de-

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† *Deipnos. lib. 3.*

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fire to succeed, that I cannot forbear saying something of it in this place ; without it indeed all the other great Talents of an Author are of small Importance to himself or others. He will improve very little by his own Speculations, who is not able to impart them in a clear and distinct manner. Obscurity of Language naturally arises from huddled and confused Thoughts, if it be not always occasioned by them. Yet it is sometimes the Unhappiness of Men very learned in many respects, that they do not conceive things, nor for that reason express their Conceptions clearly. This Misfortune was very much lamented in the late famous Mr. Dodwell, and renders his Works, wherein there are several things admirable, of much less use to the World. We sometimes find it difficult to keep up our attention



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to an Author, when he writes with the greatest ease and facility ; but when our attention becomes painful on the account of harsh and confused Language, we are much sooner discouraged, and perswaded to lay him by. What I have observ'd, as an unhappy Defect in Mr. *Dodwell*, gives me a proper Occasion of paying a small Homage to another celebrated *Lay-writer*, \* who has eminently distinguished himself in the Service of Religion, and who with all the Advantages of useful Learning, human and divine, is Master of the greatest Perspicuity and Propriety of Stile.

I propos'd in the second Place, To consider the most material Objections that have been rais'd against *Homer*, with respect to the *Iliad*, by ancient and modern Cri-

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\* Mr. *Nelson*.

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ticks, or which might arise from my own Observation. This is the most invidious and ungrateful part of the Work. For tho' possibly there may be some things exceptionable in this Poem,

————— *Velut si*  
*Egregio insperfos reprehenda corpore*  
*Navos.*

Yet there is hazard in arraigning, tho' upon good Evidence, and only in part, what has once got a popular Sanction, and been received with universal Applause. Besides, it has been observ'd in Fact, that the Criticks, who have wrote against *Homer*, in attacking his Reputation, have seldom or never fail'd to expose their own. *The Muses*, says *Madam Dacier*, have always taken Care to revenge their Favorite. *Protagoras* the Sophist, *Plato* and *Zoilus*, are remarkable Instances of what this learned and ingenious

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ingenious Lady observes. I know nothing the Sophist has left us, but a wretched Criticism (for which he is chastised by *Aristotle* \*) upon *Homer's* Invocation, in the Entrance of his Work; where he speaks to the Deity invoc'd, in the Imperative Mood, which yet may be, and is often promiscuously used, for the Optative. If we may judge of the rest of *Protagoras* his Criticisms upon *Homer* from this, he had small Prospect, I do not say of advancing, but of saving his Reputation by them.

*Plato* really Merits the Name of a Critick, and many of his Criticisms on *Homer* are just; yet the Disrespect, wherewith he sometimes treats that Poet, provok'd *Athenaus* † to fall upon him in the most violent manner, and to transmit his Name to Posterity, so far as he was capable of transmitting it, with

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\* Poet. l. 19. † Deipnos. l. 13.

great

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great Disadvantage. I forbear to render the Terms wherein *Athenaeus* speaks; there seems to be as much Rancour and little *Decency* in them, as in some of our fugitive Weekly Papers. But what Disorders are our Penmen in a way of running into, when one, who for some Years took upon him to judge of polite Writing and Manners, and in many things, BY YOUR FAVOUR, judg'd well, has left after Ages, if they may be handed down so long, two or three of the most gross and scandalous Precedents in this kind, (tho' very much at his own Expence) which this or perhaps any Age has produced. If we be suffer'd to go on in these Irregularities, where will they terminate at last? Shall we not justly lie under a Suspicion both at home and abroad, at once of forgetting our good Sense and Correctness,

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rectness, as Writers, and our good Temper, as *Englishmen*?

But, above all the rest, that have Cavill'd at *Homer*, *Zoilus* has distinguish'd himself. Yet instead of Establishing his Credit with *Ptolomy Philadelphus* by his Criticisms, to whom they were Addressed, he had but a very indifferent Reception upon presenting them. He is reported by *Vitruvius* to have come to an unfortunate End. This we know, that he is become a common Name of Reproach to every pretending Writer, that would signalize himself by Pedantry, and false Criticism.

I may add, Sir, that a more modern Critick, mentioned before, has acquir'd no great Reputation by his Endeavours to lessen, or rather indeed to vilify *Homer*; for to this End, among other homely Comparisons, he is so indecent as to go into his Kitchen for one, and  
tells

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tells us, that the † Sentences of this Poet in particular, are so jejune, vulgar and insipid, that even his Cook would not be capable of relishing them. I shall take the Liberty of transcribing some part of Mr. Dryden's Judgment of this learned Man. *Julius Scaliger*, says he, *would needs run down Homer; and abdicate him after the Possession of Three thousand Years. Has he succeeded in his Attempt? He has indeed shown us some of those Imperfections incident to human Kind. But who had not rather be that Homer than this Scaliger. You see the same Hypercritick — We should the less wonder at the Prejudice Scaliger had taken up against Homer, as in the Epistle to his Son Sylvius, before his Poetick, he speaks very much to the Disad-*

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† Jul. Scaliger. Poet. l. 5.

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vantage of *Aristotle's* Art of Poetry, so much, and so justly esteem'd by good Criticks in all Ages; for which the learned *Ger. Jo. Vossius* animadverts handsomely upon him in the Introduction to his *Poetical Institutions*.

I need produce no other Instances to shew how full of Hazard and Danger it is either to revive, or raise Objections against *Homer*. Yet am the less discouraged at these Examples, as I have no Intention to follow them in a way, wherein it has been observ'd, they so unhappily miscarried. Tho' where I see reason for observing any considerable Defect in the Poet, shall do it with a Deference due to his Character, and the Frailty of human Nature, in its highest Elevation.

11

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the World who do not concur with me in the Sentiments I have express'd, and ought to have, of your good and generous Qualities. But while I satisfy my own Mind in what I say or do, which by the Blessing of God I shall always endeavour, there is less to be apprehended from the Consequences of what the World may think or speak of me; especially, at a time wherein a Dissent in certain political Notions, is thought by an adverse Party, sufficient to cancel all the Obligations of Charity and good Manners, and I may add, Sir, while I am speaking to you, of Friendship, and Gratitude; the most powerful of all other Engagements to an ingenuous Mind. For my part, leaving such People to the Discipline of their own Minds, I shall always desire to judge both of Things and Persons, accord-



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according to Truth, and never make either private Obligations or Resentments, the Foundation of my Judgment. I cannot at a more proper time, than after this Declaration, mention one good Quality in particular, which I have had an Opportunity of observing, and should be very injurious to you not to mention, and that is, a disinterested Inclination to do whatever you once think reasonable to be done; the *most disinterested*, I do not say, that I have known, but that I believe any Person upon his Knowledge, all Circumstances consider'd, can produce Instances of.

Permit me, Sir, to acquaint you in the Conclusion, that I was willing in a Work, to which I know myself so very unequal, to consult some Persons, who were best able to advise me in it. I had

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had the Favour in particular of some general Directions from the Reverend Dr. *Sherlock*, Master of the *Temple* ; who is equally happy in all the bright Qualifications of a *Scholar*, and a *Divine*.

I had also the Honour of Communicating my Design to another very good Judge in all the parts of polite Literature ; the present Provost of *Dublin* † ; and must therefore crave leave to acknowledge here his Candid Approbation of it. Tho' it can never be out of Place on any Occasion, to mention a Person of so great and singular Humanity to all Persons, on all Occasions.

But I consider to how great a Length I have drawn this *Prefatory Address* ; shall therefore retire at present, and wait on

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† Dr. *Prot.*

you

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you with the three several Parts  
of the Remarks, I am preparing,  
at such proper and several Times,  
as you shall think fit to Com-  
mand.

*Reverend Sir,*

*Your most obedient*

*and faithful Servant,*

Jan. 22. 1713-4.

R. I. FIDDES.

**AUTHORS** *refer'd to,*  
*or cited in the* Prefa-  
 tory Epistle.

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*Madam Dacier.*

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*D. Longinus.*

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*M. Rapin.*

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*Seneca.*

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*Solon.*

*Mr. St——l.*

*Mr. Trapp.*

*Virgil.*

*Ger. Jo. Vossius.*





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